

**Assessing the social acceptability of Marine Protected Areas
(MPAs) – a comparison between Port Stephens-Great Lakes Marine
Park (PSGLMP) and Batemans Marine Park (BMP) in NSW**

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*Thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements of the degree of Doctor of
Philosophy (C02031)*

CERTIFICATE OF ORIGINAL AUTHORSHIP

I certify that the work in this thesis has not previously been submitted for a degree nor has it been submitted as part of requirements for a degree except as fully acknowledged within the text.

I also certify that the thesis has been written by me. Any help that I have received in my research work and the preparation of the thesis itself has been acknowledged. In addition, I certify that all information sources and literature used are indicated in the thesis.

Signature of Student:



Date: 27/01/2014

*This thesis is dedicated to my loving and supportive family –
my husband Deon and my beautiful boys Cameron and Jonathon, as well as my parents,
Helen and Michael.*

*Also in loving memory of Meredith Hall who demonstrated in her work and life that
conservation and compassion need not be mutually exclusive. Her passion, kindness, insight
and sense of humour are sorely missed.*

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Table of Contents

Acknowledgements	v
List of Tables	x
List of Figures.....	xiii
List of Acronyms.....	xvii
Definitions.....	xviii
Abstract	xxi
1. Introduction	1
1.1 Marine Protected Areas (MPAs)	1
1.2 The human dimension of MPAs – influences on community acceptance	3
1.3 Thesis outline	4
2. Literature review: social assessment in MPA planning	5
2.1 Introduction.....	5
2.2 Why assess social impacts?	6
2.3 Methods of social assessment.....	8
2.4 Incorporating social assessment into MPA planning	9
2.5 Social impact assessment of MPAs – some Australian approaches	10
2.6 Attitudinal studies and MPAs	13
2.7 The politics of social assessment.....	14
2.8 Discussion	15
2.9 Conclusions.....	18
3. Approach and Methods.....	21
3.1 Introduction and background: Research philosophy and researcher positioning ..	21
3.2 Research purpose	22
3.3 Research methodology	23
3.4 Research design	23
3.5 Case selection.....	24
3.6 Research methods	25
3.7 Generalisability versus transferability	26

3.8	Human ethics	27
3.9	Conclusion.....	27
4.	Context.....	29
4.1	Introduction.....	29
4.2	Methods.....	34
4.3	Regulatory and planning background	35
4.4	History of the Port Stephens area	44
4.5	History of the Eurobodalla area.....	48
4.6	Regional profile of the Port Stephens area	54
4.7	Regional profile of the Eurobodalla area.....	59
4.8	Discussion	65
4.9	Conclusion.....	67
5.	Media	69
5.1	Introduction.....	69
5.2	Methods.....	71
5.3	Results	73
5.4	Discussion	99
5.5	Conclusions.....	105
6.	Social impacts of the marine parks.....	107
6.1	Introduction.....	107
6.2	Methods.....	110
6.3	Results	116
6.4	Discussion	157
6.5	Conclusion.....	158
7.	General Discussion and Conclusions	159
7.1	Introduction.....	159
7.2	BMP - The perfect storm	159
7.3	Communication & community engagement	162
7.4	Social assessment and social impact mitigation.....	166
7.5	Public policy: Seeking synergies between fisheries management and biodiversity protection	169

7.6	Further research directions	171
7.7	Conclusion.....	171
8.	References.....	173
	Appendices	189

List of Tables

Table 2.1: Overview of Australian examples of social assessment in MPAs (Marine Protected Areas).....	16
Table 3.1: Research questions, methods and data sources.....	25
Table 3.2: Methods and factors influencing community acceptance matrix	26
Table 4.1: Regional Profile data requirements and sources.....	35
Table 4.2: Planning stages of the PSGLMP and BMP and community response	36
Table 4.3: Population size of marine park area compared with the number of submissions received during the planning process, including the results of Chi square tests comparing the frequency of submissions on the two marine parks.....	36
Table 4.4: Summary of actual and expected numbers of submissions according to geographical origin. Expected values were calculated relative to the proportion of total submissions received on each park (47% on PSGLMP and 53% on BMP). Also shown are the results of Chi square tests comparing the frequency of submissions from different geographical areas in the two marine parks.	37
Table 4.5: Summary of actual and expected numbers of submissions according to interest groups of respondents. Expected values were calculated relative to the proportion of total submissions received on each park (47% on PSGLMP and 53% on BMP). Also shown are the results of Chi square tests comparing the frequency of submissions from different interest groups in the two marine parks.....	38
Table 4.6: Summary of actual and expected numbers of submissions generated by sectoral interests groups. Expected values were calculated relative to the proportion of total submissions received on each park (47% on PSGLMP and 53% on BMP). Also shown are the results of Chi square tests comparing the frequency of submissions generated by sectoral interest groups across the two parks.....	39
Table 4.7: Frequency of comments relating to all zones in the draft marine park zoning plans in the PSGLMP and BMP.....	39
Table 4.8: Total Ocean Zone 5 and Estuary Region 4 (PSGLMP) 2002/03 and Batemans Bay/Two-fold Shelf Marine Bioregion professional fishery value 2004/05 (From Marine Parks Authority 2006a; Powell & Chalmers 2006)	40
Table 5.1: Local newspapers within marine park areas.....	71
Table 5.2: Supportive media frames: Benefits and value of the marine park.....	76
Table 5.3: Critical media frames: Socio-economic impacts of the marine park.....	77
Table 5.4: Critical media frames: Socio-economic impacts of the marine park.....	77
Table 5.5: Critical media frames: government processes.....	78
Table 5.6: Number of writers responsible for letters to the editor according to source publication (2005-2010)	80
Table 5.7: Number of articles and letters to the editor featuring selected interview participants between 2005 and 2010	80

Table 5.8: Supportive media frames: Benefits and value of the marine park	86
Table 5.9: Critical media frames: Socio-economic impacts of the marine park	87
Table 5.10: Critical media frames: Socio-economic impacts of the marine park	88
Table 5.11: Number of writers responsible for letters to the editor according to source publication (2005-2010).	90
Table 5.12: Number of articles and letters to the editor featuring selected interview participants between 2005 and 2010	90
Table 5.13: Count of references made to key political themes within interviews with conservation and fishing media spokespeople	92
Table 5.14: Count of criticisms of the opposition within interviews with conservation and fishing media spokespeople	93
Table 5.15: Count of references to battle terminology within interviews with conservation and fishing media spokespeople	93
Table 5.16: Summary of actual and expected numbers of newspaper articles (standardised), and the distribution of attitudes towards the PSGLMP and BMP in these articles. Also shown are the results of Chi square tests comparing the frequency of different types of articles in the two marine parks for 2005-2010.	95
Figure 5.17: Media sources for fishing spokespeople in BMP and PSGLMP in the period 2005–2010.	99
Table 6.1 Features of the continuum of specialisation for recreational fishing.....	109
Table 6.2: Interview participants across stakeholder groups.....	111
Table 6.3: Explanation of impact codes identified in the interviews with recreational fishers from the PSGLMP and BMP.	121
Table 6.4: Explanation of the main impact on wellbeing codes identified in the interviews with recreational fishers from the PSGLMP and BMP.	123
Table 6.5: Coding matrix: Knowledge holders by criticism codes for recreational fishers in the PSGLMP and BMP	127
Table 6.6: Coding matrix: Criticism codes by social impact codes relating to fairness and equity for recreational fishers in the PSGLMP and BMP	128
Table 6.7: Explanation of impact on enjoyment codes identified in the interviews with professional fishers from the PSGLMP and BMP.....	132
Table 6.8: Explanation of the main impact on wellbeing codes identified in the interviews with recreational fishers from the PSGLMP and BMP.	135
Table 6.9: Coding matrix: Knowledge holders by 'sources of knowledge' and 'social identity' codes for professional fishers in the PSGLMP and BMP	137
Table 6.10: Explanation of the main impact on wellbeing codes identified in the interviews with Indigenous fishers from the PSGLMP and BMP.	143
Table 6.11: Matrix query results of recreational fishers opposed to the marine parks: Motivation to fish codes by social impact codes (including illustrative quotes).	149

Table 6.12: Matrix query results of professional fishers opposed to the marine parks: Motivation to fish codes by social impact codes (including illustrative quotes).	150
Table 6.13: Matrix query results of Indigenous fishers opposed to and unsure about the marine parks: Motivation to fish codes by social impact codes (including illustrative quotes).	151
Table 6.14: Matrix query results of all fishers opposed to the marine parks: Social identity by social impact codes (including illustrative quotes).	153
Table 6.15: Matrix query results of all fishers opposed to the marine parks: Social identity by knowledge claims codes (including illustrative quotes).	156
Table 7.1. Summary of research findings about the key factors influencing community acceptance of the PSGLMP and BMP.....	161

List of Figures

Figure 3.1: Diagram of embedded case study research design	25
Figure 4.1: NSW Marine Protected Areas (From Marine Parks Authority 2012a)	29
Figure 4.2: Port Stephens-Great Lakes Marine Park Zoning Map (From Marine Parks Authority 2012a).....	31
Figure 4.4: Batemans Marine Park Zoning Map (From Marine Parks Authority 2012a).....	31
Figure 4.4: Recreational fishing havens in NSW (Department of Primary Industries 2012c)	41
Figure 4.5: Increase or decrease in the number of people in the Port Stephens area shire within 5 year age brackets since 2001, based on 2011 census data (Profile ID 2013).....	55
Figure 4.6: Concentration levels of the number of persons aged 65 and over residing in the Port Stephens area, 2011 (total persons excluding overseas visitors)(Profile ID 2013)	56
Figure 4.7: Increase or decrease in the highest qualification achieved of persons residing in the Port Stephens area. Changes measured since 2006, based on 2011 census data (Profile ID 2012).....	57
Figure 4.8: Employment and labour force status, Port Stephens Area and New South Wales, 2011 (Profile ID 2013).....	57
Figure 4.9: Increase or decrease in the number of people employed per industry from 2006 to 2011, Port Stephens Area (Profile ID 2013).	58
Figure 4.10: Weekly individual income, Port Stephens area and New South Wales, 2011. (Profile ID 2013)	59
Figure 4.11: Increase or decrease in the number of people in the Eurobodalla shire within 5 year age brackets since 2001, based on 2011 census data (Profile ID 2012)	60
Figure 4.12: Concentration levels of the number of persons aged 65 and over residing in the Eurobodalla Shire, 2011 (total persons excluding overseas visitors) (From Atlas ID 2012)	61
Figure 4.13: Increase or decrease in the highest qualification achieved of persons residing in the Eurobodalla Shire. Changes measured since 2001, based on 2011 census data (Profile ID 2012).....	62
Figure 4.14: Employment and labour force status, Eurobodalla Shire and New South Wales, 2011 (Profile ID 2012).....	62
Figure 4.15: Increase or decrease in the number of people employed per industry from 2006 to 2011, Eurobodalla Shire (Profile ID 2012).	63
Figure 4.16: Weekly individual income, Eurobodalla Shire and New South Wales, 2011. (Profile ID 2012)	64
Figure 5.1: Coverage of the marine park in news articles of PSGLMP local newspapers 2005-2010	74
Figure 5.2: Coverage of the marine park in news articles on the PSGLMP according to source publication 2005-2010	74
Figure 5.3: Representation of major stakeholder groups as primary definer in marine park news articles in the areas covered by the PSGLMP.....	75

Figure 5.4: Representation of major stakeholder groups as primary definer in marine park news articles according to source publication.....	75
Figure 5.5: Coverage of the marine park in editorials in PSGLMP local print media 2005-2010	78
Figure 5.6: Letters to the editor on the marine park issue in PSGLMP local print media 2005-2010	79
Figure 5.7: Letters to the editor on the marine park issue in local print media by publication 2005-2010	80
Figure 5.8: Coverage of the marine park in news articles of BMP local print media 2005-2010	83
Figure 5.9: Coverage of the Batemans Marine Park in news articles according to source publication 2005-2010.....	84
Figure 5.10: Representation of major stakeholder groups as primary definer in marine park news articles in 2005-2010 in the areas covered by the BMP.....	85
Figure 5.11: Representation of major stakeholder groups as primary definer in BMP marine park news articles in 2005-2010 according to source publication.	86
Figure 5.12: Coverage of the marine park in editorials in BMP local print media in 2005-2010.	89
Figure 5.13: Letters to the editor on the marine park issue in BMP local print media in 2005-2010.	89
Figure 5.14: Representation of major stakeholder groups as primary definer in marine park news (expressed as percentage of total articles for each park) in 2005-2010.	96
Figure 5.15: Affiliations of politicians used as primary definers and the frequency distribution of the articles in which they featured that were classified as critical, supportive, mixed or neutral. NB The 'fishing party' category is an amalgam of three fishing, hunting or outdoor recreation parties active at the time.	97
Figure 5.16: Media sources for conservation spokespeople in the BMP and PSGLMP in the period 2005–2010.	98
Figure 5.17: Media sources for fishing spokespeople in BMP and PSGLMP in the period 2005–2010	99
Figure 6.1: Thematic analysis overview	114
Figure 6.2: Levels of support and opposition to the local marine park by PSGLMP recreational fishing interview participants – participants were asked to rank their opinion when they first heard about the park (before implementation) and now (after implementation).....	117
Figure 6.3: Levels of support and opposition to the local marine park by BMP recreational fishing interview participants – participants were asked to rank their opinion when they first heard about the park (before implementation) and now (after implementation).....	118
Figure 6.4: Level of specialisation amongst recreational fishing research participants in the PSGLMP and BMP.	118

Figure 6.5: Motivation to fish for recreational fishing interview participants in the PSGLMP and BMP	119
Figure 6.6: Recreational fishing interview participants responses to the statements: 1. I go fishing less often because of the marine park' and 2. 'I enjoy fishing less because of the marine park'.	120
Figure 6.7: Recreational fishing participants responses to the statements: 1.My family life has suffered since the creation of the marine park. 2. I feel more angry, depressed or unhappy since the creation of the marine park and 3. I have lost money because of the marine park.	122
Figure 6.8: Recreational fishing participants' responses to the statements: 1.The marine park has divided my local community. 2. The marine park has financially benefited my local community.	124
Figure 6.9: PSGLMP and BMP recreational fishing participants responses to the statements: 1. Before the marine park was declared I worried about the health and/or management of our local marine waters. 2. I think the health and/or management of our local marine waters has improved since the marine park was declared.3.There are more fish to catch since the marine park was declared.	125
Figure 6.10: Levels of support and opposition to the PSGLMP by professional fishing interview participants – participants were asked to rank their opinion when they first heard about the park (before implementation) and now (after implementation).	129
Figure 6.11: Levels of support and opposition to the BMP by professional fishing interview participants – participants were asked to rank their opinion when they first heard about the park (before implementation) and now (after implementation).	130
Figure 6.12: Motivation to fish for professional fishing interview participants.	130
Figure 6.13: Professional fishing interview participants (%) responses to the statements: 1. I go fishing less often because of the marine park' and 2. 'I enjoy fishing less because of the marine park'.	131
Figure 6.14: Professional fishing interview participants' responses to the statements: 1.My family life has suffered since the creation of the marine park. 2. I feel more angry, depressed or unhappy since the creation of the marine park and 3. I have lost money because of the marine park (NB non responses omitted).	133
Figure 6.15: Professional fishing participant's responses to the statements: 1.The marine park has divided my local community. 2. The marine park has financially benefited my local community (NB non responses omitted).	135
Figure 6.16: PSGLMP and BMP professional fishing participants' responses to the statements: 1. Before the marine park was declared I worried about the health and/or management of our local marine waters. 2. I think the health and/or management of our local marine waters has improved since the marine park was declared.3.There are more fish to catch since the marine park was declared.	136

Figure 6.17: Levels of support and opposition to the local marine park by Indigenous interview participants – participants were asked to rank their opinion when they first heard about the park (before implementation) and now (after implementation)	138
Figure 6.18: Levels of support and opposition to the local marine park by BMP Indigenous interview participants, who were asked to rank their opinion when they first heard about the park (before implementation) and now (after implementation)	139
Figure 6.19: Motivation to fish according to Indigenous interview participants – participants were asked why they fished, and what they enjoyed about fishing.	140
Figure 6.20: Indigenous fishing interview participants' (%) responses to the statements: 1. I go fishing less often because of the marine park' and 2. 'I enjoy fishing less because of the marine park'.	141
Figure 6.21: Indigenous fishing interview participants' responses to the statements: 1. My family life has suffered since the creation of the marine park, 2. I feel more angry, depressed or unhappy since the creation of the marine park, and 3. I have lost money because of the marine park (NB non responses omitted).	142
Figure 6.22: Indigenous fishing participants' responses to the statements: 1. The marine park has divided my local community, and 2. The marine park has financially benefited my local community (NB non responses omitted).	144
Figure 6.23: PSGLMP and BMP Indigenous fishing participants' responses to the statements: 1. Before the marine park was declared I worried about the health and/or management of our local marine waters, 2. I think the health and/or management of our local marine waters has improved since the marine park was declared, and 3. There are more fish to catch since the marine park was declared (NB non responses omitted).	145
Figure 6.24: Frequency distribution of responses by fishers who either supported, were not sure, or opposed the marine parks to the statement: 'Before the marine park was declared I worried about the health and/or management of our local marine waters.'	154
Figure 6.25: Frequency distribution of responses by fishers who either supported, were not sure, or opposed the marine parks to the statement: 'I think the health and/or management of our local marine waters has improved since the marine park.'	155
Figure 7.1. Conceptual model illustrating the potential practical applications of the research findings.	163

List of Acronyms

APB	Aboriginal Protection Board
BMP	Batemans Marine Park
CBD	Convention on Biological Diversity
eNGOs	Environmental Non-Government Organisations
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organisation of the United Nations
GBRMPA	Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority
GBRMP	Great Barrier Reef Marine Park
IUCN	International Union for the Conservation of Nature
JBMP	Jervis Bay Marine Park
LGA	Local Government Area
MPA	Marine Protected Area
NSW	New South Wales
NRSMPA	National Representative System of Marine Protected Areas
PSGLMP	Port Stephens-Great Lakes Marine Park
RAP	Representative Areas Program
SIA	Social Impact Assessment
SIMP	Solitary Islands Marine Park

Definitions

Cultural fishing	“Fishing activities and practices carried out by Aboriginal persons for the purpose of satisfying their personal, domestic or communal needs, or for educational or ceremonial purposes or other traditional purposes, and which do not have a commercial purpose” (Department of Primary Industries 2012a)
Marine protected area	“An area of land and/or sea especially dedicated to the protection and maintenance of biological diversity, and of natural and associated cultural resources, and managed through legal or other effective means”(International Union for Conservation of Nature 1994)
No take zones	Also often referred to as ‘marine reserves’, ‘highly protected area’ or marine ‘sanctuaries’, no take zones refer to areas in which any extraction of marine resources (living or non-living) is prohibited.
Precautionary Principle	“The absence of scientific certainty should not be a reason for postponing measures to establish MPAs to protect representative ecosystems”(Australian and New Zealand Environment and Conservation Council 1998)
Representativeness	The National Representative System of Marine Protected Areas aims to include a reasonable reflection of the “biotic diversity of the marine ecosystems from which they derive”.(Australian and New Zealand Environment and Conservation Council 1998)
Sea country	“For coastal Aboriginal people, there is no distinction between land and sea: ‘Country’ extends offshore to include the sea and its resources. This holistic view ‘of continuous land and sea Country “as far as the eye can see”’ means that Aboriginal people conceptualise the coast very differently to non-Indigenous Australians, and to the worldview which underpins the Australian legal system...‘Sea Country’ (is) a term which includes the land and waters in the coastal zone of NSW, including the ocean, bays, shores, dunal environment and coastal estuaries and

their shores.” (NSW Office of Environment and Heritage 2012 p.2)

Social impacts

“..the consequences to human populations of any public or private actions that alter the ways in which people live, work, play, relate to one another, organise to meet their needs and generally cope as members of society. The term also includes cultural impacts involving changes to the norms, values and beliefs that guide and rationalise their cognition of themselves and their society.”

(Interorganisational Committee on Guidelines and Principles 2003)

Social impact assessment

“..the process of analysing, monitoring and managing the intended and unintended social consequences, both positive and negative, of planned interventions (policies, programs, plans, projects) and any social change processes invoked by those interventions. Its primary purpose is to bring about a more sustainable and equitable biophysical and human environment.” (Vanclay 2003b)

Abstract

The biological success of Marine Protected Areas (MPAs) depends to a large extent on their social acceptability. Considerable efforts are increasingly being expended on public participation processes and socio-economic assessments during MPA planning exercises, yet local opposition remains a largely consistent response to MPA proposals around the world. This resistance has slowed international progress towards a global network of MPAs. Two case studies in New South Wales, Australia were used to examine some of the factors that may influence community attitudes towards MPAs using a multi-disciplinary approach, incorporating media studies, social impact assessment, social research and oral history traditions. The Port Stephens-Great Lakes Marine Park (PSGLMP) and Batemans Marine Park (BMP) were established in December 2005 and April 2006 respectively. Both underwent virtually identical and concurrent planning processes. However resistance to the BMP was more intense and sustained and continues to this day. This thesis is unique in that the virtually identical and simultaneous planning processes conducted in the two study areas provides a valuable opportunity to look beyond governance processes and examine a wide array of influences on community responses to these MPAs. Key variables were compared to examine what may have contributed to this differential community response. These were:

- demographics and history;
- local media coverage and the role of influential media spokespeople; and
- the social impacts of the parks.

The results found that the BMP demonstrated the 'perfect storm' of opposition triggers – a community struggling in the transition away from a primary production economy, a highly politicised media dominated by powerful elites with ideological objections to the park, and social impacts sufficiently profound to motivate local citizens to support an active campaign against the park. Opposition to MPAs, however, cannot be explained by impact alone. All the marine park opponents interviewed represented themselves as 'knowledge holders' about their local marine area. This knowledge – predominately 'fish' knowledge – appears to have conflicted with a policy position which places biodiversity conservation as the primary objective of MPAs. This has led to a perception that the practical knowledge of users was not valued in the planning of each marine park.

This research points to the importance of looking beyond a 'one size fits all' approach to MPA planning. Planning efforts require a deeper understanding of the social, cultural and political landscape of the communities in which MPAs are proposed. In particular the study identified three main areas in which the better integration of socio-cultural considerations is critical. They are communication and community engagement, social assessment and public policy.

